

# Connections



Parks and Recreation Division

Strategic Plan 2017-2022

DRAFT May 1, 2017



*These are the people's parks  
owned by young and old...*

— Harry S. Truman

# Table of Contents

Welcome .....	3
Executive Summary .....	5
Guiding Resources .....	7
Quick Facts .....	8
Mission Statements .....	9
Planning Process .....	10
Summary of Statewide Engagement .....	11
Issue Statements .....	12
Goals, Objectives, and Strategies .....	16
Implementation Plan .....	26
Appendix A: Timeline of Significant Events .....	28
Appendix B: SWOT Results Report .....	30
Appendix C: Legal Authorities .....	33

Michigan residents are never more than an hour away from a state park or recreation area.







Thank you for taking the time to connect with us.

Michigan's award-winning parks and recreation resources are waiting for you to explore. Here in Michigan, these diverse resources play a defining role in residents' quality of life and the future of this state.

The Michigan Department of Natural Resources Parks and Recreation Division (PRD) began **connecting** people to nature in 1919 with the formation of the Michigan State Parks Commission and the establishment of the first park in the system, Interlochen State Park. Today, PRD is responsible for the operation and maintenance of an extensive and diverse system of land and water recreation resources statewide (see Quick Facts on page 8).

Michigan residents are never more than an hour away from a state park or recreation area. These resources belong to all of us, providing opportunities for us to **connect** in many ways. Campers unite with family and friends while relaxing around a campfire. Trails provide a bridge between communities and to other recreation opportunities. Collaboration between PRD and many partners, and between the public and private sector, allows for the completion of projects that would otherwise not be feasible. School groups experience the natural and cultural environment through outdoor classrooms and interpretive centers. Michigan's waterways provide an **interconnected** system for a variety of boaters. Out-of-state visitors are drawn through social media, word of mouth and advertising to Michigan's world-class natural and cultural resources, which serves to strengthen the local and state economies.

Michigan residents continue to care deeply about their state's natural and cultural resources. Changes in technology, local economies and land use patterns affect the way people recreate and interact with nature and Michigan's heritage. We must proactively **connect** people, particularly youth, with nature, or Michigan's natural and cultural resources will be jeopardized. It is important to continue making these resource **connections** to preserve the future of Michigan's quality of life.

In this document, goals, objectives and strategies are identified to strengthen **connections** between the natural and human environment in order to guarantee they will remain meaningful for future generations.

Ronald A. Olson  
*Chief, Parks and Recreation*





# Executive Summary

The Parks and Recreation Division Strategic Plan 2017-2022: Connections is the overarching document that will guide the division in carrying out its mission to “acquire, protect, and preserve the natural and cultural features of Michigan’s unique resources, and to provide access to land- and water-based recreation and educational opportunities” over the upcoming five-year period. This plan is the culmination of 18 months’ effort to define where resources should be focused for maximum benefit to carry the state park and recreation system beyond its centennial milestone in 2019. The plan was developed with input from staff, other DNR divisions and state agencies, advisory groups, stakeholders, our many community, recreation and environmental partners, and members of the public who are passionate about the natural and cultural resources PRD is entrusted to protect and the recreation and education opportunities provided.

The statewide engagement process that guided this plan development identified the following 10 issues that form the nucleus of this plan:

- The Environment
- Balancing Recreation and Protection
- Trails
- Staying Relevant in a Digital Age
- Communication
- Economic Impact
- Politics and Policy
- Funding
- Management and Administration
- Staffing

Analysis of how to address these primary issues led to the development of eight goals that PRD will work towards.

**Goal 1:** Be exemplary stewards of Michigan’s natural and cultural resources.

**Goal 2:** Provide users with quality outdoor recreation experiences in balance with resource protection.

**Goal 3:** Continue to advance Michigan as the “Trail state.”

**Goal 4:** Provide a relevant gateway to connect people to nature and Michigan’s cultural heritage, and foster understanding and support for PRD’s mission among future generations.

**Goal 5:** Improve and maintain strong public, stakeholder and department communication, relationships and partnerships.

**Goal 6:** Engage in strategies to increase community and state economic prosperity.

**Goal 7:** Sustainably support PRD programs, operations and facilities.

**Goal 8:** Foster and adopt effective and safe business practices.

Each goal is broken down into a series of objectives and strategies that define how the goals will be met.

Integral to any plan is the implementation. On an annual basis, PRD will develop an action plan to establish priority areas of focus each year. At the end of each fiscal year, the division will report on the progress made in advancing the strategic plan goals and objectives. PRD cannot accomplish the strategic plan’s goals and objectives alone; success will require partnership with vested stakeholders. An integrated approach to implementation is critical, ensuring all staff, advisory groups, stakeholders and partners are informed and committed to a coordinated approach to furthering the success of PRD for the benefit of the state in years to come.





# Guiding Resources

The following guiding resources include plans, concepts and established directions that were used in the development of the *Parks and Recreation Division Strategic Plan 2017-2022: Connections*. Given the significance of these guiding resources, they were an integral part of establishing the goals and objectives of the strategic plan. These plans also provide general guidance to support action plan activities and management decisions in order to successfully meet each goal and objective identified in this strategic plan.

## Michigan Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) (2013-2017)

SCORP is a five-year strategic plan that shapes investment by the state and local communities in priority outdoor recreation infrastructure and programming. This plan is currently being updated.

[http://www.recpro.org/assets/Library/SCORPs/mi\\_scorp\\_2013.pdf](http://www.recpro.org/assets/Library/SCORPs/mi_scorp_2013.pdf)

## Michigan State Parks and Outdoor Recreation Blue Ribbon Panel Report (2012)

The Blue Ribbon Panel's report to Governor Snyder identifies a number of recommendations for systemwide changes to programs, management, infrastructure type and investment strategies that set up the visionary framework for the next 30-50 years of park and outdoor recreation management in Michigan.

[http://www.michigan.gov/documents/snyder/ParksPanelFinal\\_401824\\_7.pdf](http://www.michigan.gov/documents/snyder/ParksPanelFinal_401824_7.pdf)

## Michigan Comprehensive Trail Plan (2013 - 2018)

The Trail Plan, developed by an 11-member committee appointed by Governor Snyder, includes eight priority recommendations with associated key actions that should be implemented to assist in achieving the vision of establishing a high-quality, nationally recognized, statewide trail system.

[https://www.michigan.gov/documents/dnr/MI\\_Comprehensive\\_Trail\\_Plan\\_425377\\_7.pdf](https://www.michigan.gov/documents/dnr/MI_Comprehensive_Trail_Plan_425377_7.pdf)

## Managed Public Land Strategy (2013)

The DNR-Managed Public Land Strategy provides a framework for the continued conservation, use and management of public lands to provide an enhanced quality of life for Michigan residents, create jobs and protect the essence of Michigan, its woods, waters, wildlife and other natural and cultural assets.

[http://www.michigan.gov/documents/dnr/Draft\\_DNR\\_Public\\_Land\\_Management\\_Strategy-5-24-13\\_422381\\_7.pdf](http://www.michigan.gov/documents/dnr/Draft_DNR_Public_Land_Management_Strategy-5-24-13_422381_7.pdf)

# Quick Facts

PRD meets its mission by providing a park and recreation system that:

- Includes 103 state parks, recreation areas, scenic sites and historic state parks
- Totals 306,148 acres of recreational land
- Provides 257,155 acres of land open to hunting
- Provides 13,496 campsites and a wide range of day-use facilities
- Maintains 140 state forest campgrounds, totaling 4,058 rustic campsites
- Hosts 25 million visitors annually
- Accommodates over 1 million camp nights annually
- Provides significant support to Michigan's tourism industry and related jobs
- Provides grants to local communities for park and recreation development

PRD provides one of the premier boating programs in the country comprised of:

- 19 state harbors on the Great Lakes and connecting waterways
- 64 local community harbors developed with assistance of DNR grant funding
- 13 Harbors of Refuge
- 6,351 boat slips at both state and local harbors
- 2 state locks, one under lease to local government
- 1,100 developed public boating access sites
- Boater registrations are the thire-highest in the nation

PRD protects the state's natural and cultural resources by:

- Providing over 46,000 acres of dedicated Natural Areas
- Protecting 257 different endangered, threatened or special concern species
- Undertaking responsibilities for 805 archaeological sites and 363 historic structures
- Managing 63 exemplary examples of Michigan's 77 natural communities

PRD operates an exceptional trail system that is comprised of:

- More than 12,500 miles of trails
- Over 2,700 miles of Rail Trails connecting communities
- Over 3,600 miles of designated ORV trails and 6,000 miles of designated snowmobile trails
- Over 1,300 miles of equestrian trails, 1,400 mile of biking trails, and 4,000 miles of hiking trails
- The statewide Iron Belle Trail, with 793 biking miles (60%) and 1,223 hiking miles (72%) completed

# Mission Statements

The DNR and PRD mission statements provide the foundation for this strategic plan and the work of the department and division. While these are a constant reminder of the statutes that created the Michigan State Park System and defined the associated powers and duties, the five goals of the DNR are updated periodically to reflect new initiatives or areas of focus.

## DNR Mission Statement

The Michigan Department of Natural Resources is committed to the conservation, protection, management, use and enjoyment of the state's natural and cultural resources for current and future generations.



## PRD Mission Statement

The Parks and Recreation Division's mission is to acquire, protect, and preserve the natural and cultural features of Michigan's unique resources, and to provide access to land- and water-based public recreation and educational opportunities.



## Five Goals of the DNR

- Protect Michigan's natural and cultural resources
- Ensure sustainable recreation use and enjoyment
- Enable strong and natural resource-based economies
- Improve and build strong relationships and partnerships
- Foster effective business practices and good governance

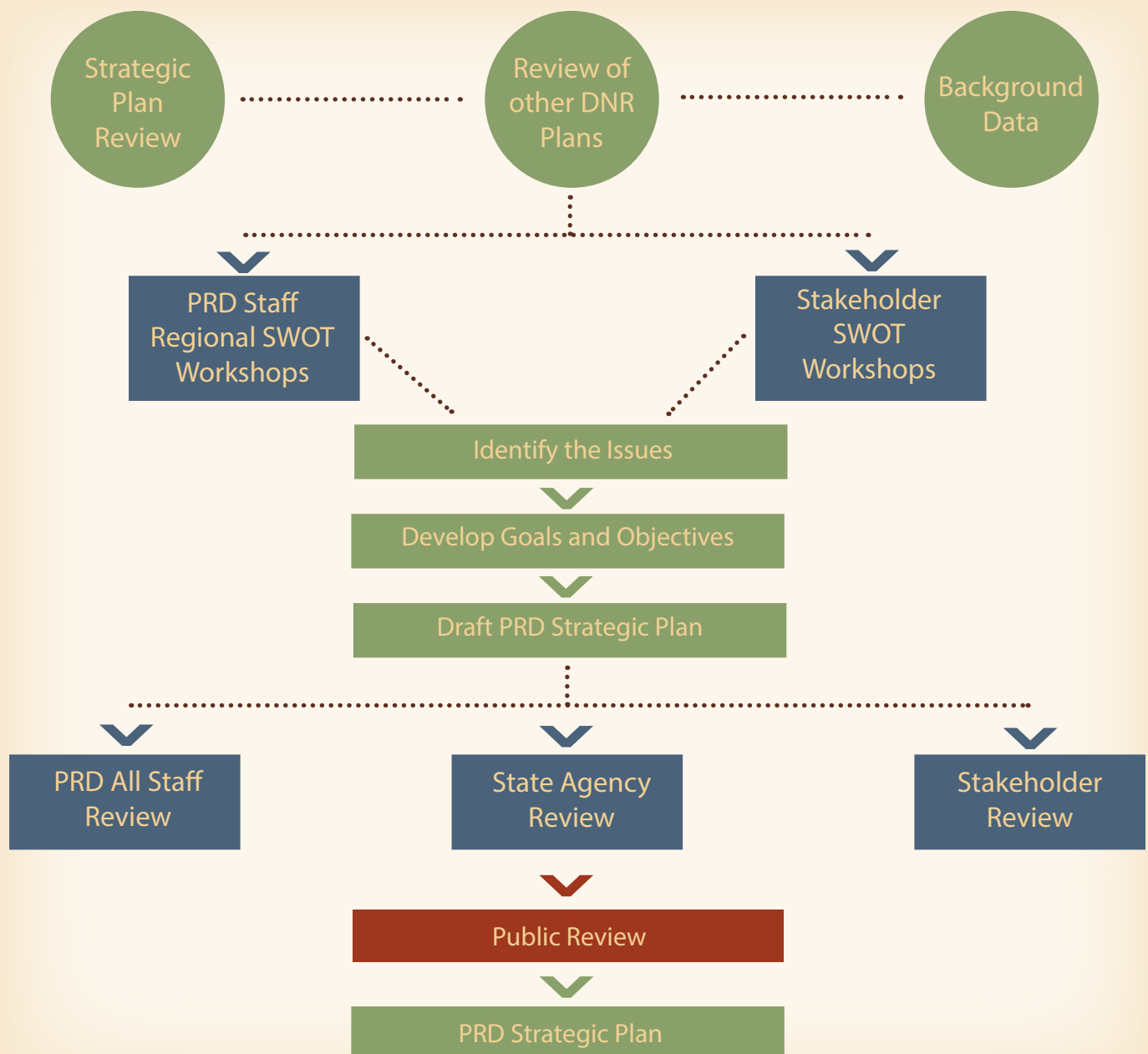




# Planning Process

Planning for the **PRD Strategic Plan 2017-2022: Connections** began in January 2016. A core planning team of PRD staff was established to guide the process. The planning process began with a review of the 2009 PRD Strategic Plan, “Sustaining 90 years of Excellence,” While the 2009 plan was intended to be a 10-year plan, valid until 2019, many changes have taken place within PRD since it was approved. Changes in how PRD is funded through the Recreation Passport, and the addition of lands, facilities, programs and statewide initiatives, meant that a new strategic plan was needed.

The planning team followed a logical step-by-step process to develop this **PRD Strategic Plan 2017-2022: Connections**, which included many opportunities for input from PRD staff, stakeholders, advisory groups and the public, as outlined by the diagram below.



# Summary of Statewide Engagement

Staff, stakeholder and advisory group input was an integral part of the strategic plan development. Between April and June 2016, the core strategic plan team held Strength, Weakness, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) workshops around the state. For PRD staff meetings, participants were asked to write down their responses, which enabled the team to identify and analyze repeating themes across the different districts and regions.

For the stakeholder and advisory committee meetings, the SWOT was conducted by asking participants to call out their responses, which were written down on a flip-chart. The information collected at these meetings was analyzed to determine recurring themes and to identify the key issues that this strategic plan should address. The input from all staff, stakeholders and advisory groups was categorized for ease of analysis.

See Appendix B on page 30 for SWOT report.

## Four Focus Areas

- Strengths
- Weaknesses
- Opportunities
- Threats

In January 2017, the draft *Parks and Recreation Division Strategic Plan 2017-2022: Connections* was made available to PRD staff, other DNR divisions and PRD advisory groups. The comments received were collected and revisions made to the plan as appropriate.

The revised draft strategic plan was released to the public on May 1, 2017 for a three-week comment period.



# Issue Statements

To develop a well-informed and supported strategic plan, a series of input workshops were held with staff, advisory groups and stakeholders to identify PRD's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (see Appendix B). From those workshops, 10 major issues were identified. These issues are the nucleus of the strategic plan, from which all goals and objectives were derived. When annual action plans are executed, they should address and respond to the 10 identified issue statements.

## The Environment

Environmental changes play a big role in the Parks and Recreation Division's success and challenges. PRD staff must be flexible but steadfast in response to invasive species, climate change and extreme weather-related events in order to protect resources and maintain a safe environment for our visitors. While PRD continues to update its best management practices and green technologies, these efforts need to be strengthened in order to combat environmental challenges. In addition, PRD must use these practices to balance the natural resources stewardship with the providing quality outdoor recreation experiences.

## Balancing Recreation and Protection

Parks and Recreation Division is committed to its core mission of ensuring the protection of Michigan's unique natural and cultural resources, while providing long-lasting memories for visitors seeking outdoor recreation experiences. The division continues to face demands to expand traditional recreational endeavors, as well as develop new trending recreation opportunities. These demands illustrate the level of service users rely on and expect from PRD. Balancing these evolving recreation interests with the protection and preservation of delicate natural and cultural resources presents an on-going challenge that needs to be addressed.

## Ten Issues

- The Environment
- Balancing Recreation and Protection
- Trails
- Staying Relevant in a Digital Age
- Communication
- Economic Impact
- Politics and Policy
- Funding
- Management and Administration
- Staffing





## Trails

In recent years, Michigan has been recognized as “The Trail state.” With 6,204 miles of snowmobile trails, 3,660 miles of off road vehicle trails, over 4,000 miles of hiking trails, 1,483 miles of biking trails, 1,398 miles of equestrian trails, and emerging water trails, Michigan has an expansive trail network. In addition, the congressionally-designated North Country National Scenic Trail runs more than 1,500 miles through Michigan. Parks and Recreation Division is responsible for nurturing the improvements, maintenance and expansion of Michigan’s diverse trail system. In addition, PRD is spearheading the Iron Belle Trail, a statewide initiative to connect hiking and biking trails from Belle Isle in Detroit to Ironwood in Michigan’s Upper Peninsula. The DNR’s Comprehensive Trails Plan is the division’s guide to achieving current trail initiatives and trail responsibilities across the state.

## Staying Relevant in a Digital Age

As an organization founded on traditional values of conservation and outdoor recreation, appealing to a generation brought up in a digital age, and reliant on digital information and entertainment, presents a challenge. Parks and Recreation Division must continue to evolve, both recreation activities and facilities offered, and in terms of how information is provided, in order to appeal to the digital generation. Another challenge is to make sure PRD takes full advantage of technological advances in the workplace. With employees spread across the state, staying connected is important to ensure effective work practices. For our customers, balancing the desire to be connected while in our state parks with the desire to be unplugged for quiet relaxation is another important consideration.

## Communication

Effective communication is vital to a successful and efficient organization. Quality customer service begins with excellent communication, and Parks and Recreation must continue to put a strong emphasis on community outreach, education, marketing and promotion, for a consistent message that is inclusive of all current and potential visitors. Good communication with PRD partners, peers and legislators is also essential to maintaining strong relationships. Communicating effectively within PRD, DNR and other state agencies results in increased efficiencies, enhanced problem-solving and more satisfied and committed staff.



# Issue Statements

## Economic Impact

Parks and Recreation Division-administered facilities (state park and recreation areas, boating access sites, harbors, trails, etc.) have a direct impact on the local and state economy. Local economies benefit from state park guests who use local restaurants, shops, recreation outfitters and hotels. In return, these businesses support park visitors and enhance their stay by providing desired commodities and services. The business community and PRD units can successfully create supportive and symbiotic relationships. Michigan's Regional Prosperity Initiative organizes the state into 10 prosperity regions, and is designed to empower local and regional partners to create economic success through collaboration. Since PRD's facilities can play a relevant role in the success of these prosperity regions, the agency needs to proactively recognize its role and be an active region participant. PRD's facilities often include remarkable or unique natural and historic resources or outdoor recreation amenities that contribute to regional identity or Placemaking for residents and visitors.

## Politics and Policy

Parks and Recreation Division recognizes that policy and politics have a significant bearing on the direction of operations, as well as on priorities of the division and department. Having a smooth process for the development and implementation of division policies and procedures is essential for improved operations. PRD and DNR must be proactive in relationship-building and communicating on issues with policy makers and legislators, to ensure accurate information is available for sound decisions. Advisory committees and commissions play a key role in assisting PRD in setting policies that support the mission of the organization.

## Funding

Parks and Recreation Division has identified over \$430 million in state park, and nearly \$50 million in state waterways, project infrastructure needs throughout the state, which is indicative of the age of many of its facilities. Annual budgets in both parks and waterways programs fall far short of what is needed to address them. PRD must review a variety of strategies in order to support its facilities, programs and operations sustainably into the future. PRD must prioritize critical infrastructure projects that impact the health and safety of visitors, while using an innovative approach to opportunities for consolidation, repurposing and long-term sustainability. Data such as the cost-to-serve, customer use records, recreation trends, and regional supply and demand will be used to make sound decisions.



## Management and Administration

Parks and Recreation Division is recognized as an organization with a clear vision that demonstrates teamwork, hard work and dedication. However, in this current society there is an increased expectation of doing more with less – less staff, less money, less time, with the obligation to complete tasks in the same timely manner and to the same high standards. This culture often creates unattainable expectations placed upon staff by themselves as well as by others. Identifying ways to balance realistic expectations with the need to continue to provide excellent service to our customers is key to having a stronger PRD. PRD needs to continue to make advances in efficiency by maximizing staff assets, building relationships and partnerships, managing and using data wisely, and implementing sound business practices.

## Staff

Staff members are the foundation of Parks and Recreation Division's outstanding organization and are what will drive its future successes. The amount of responsibility assumed by PRD has grown vastly over the past number of years, which has resulted in new challenges and opportunities for its staff members. This growth has led to the recognition that PRD needs to remain focused on providing quality training opportunities, staff retention, assessing appropriate staffing levels, balancing responsibilities, and assuring PRD continues to recruit and promote motivated individuals that are committed to upholding the division's mission.

These issues are the nucleus of the strategic plan from which all goals and objectives were derived.





# Goals, Objectives and Strategies

## Vision:

### *Enhancing the Protection of Michigan's Resources*

Michigan has healthy, abundant and diverse natural and cultural resources that provide the basis for people to enjoy a variety of outdoor recreation pursuits. Parks and Recreation Division will continue to be a leader in the proactive and sustainable management of these resources to ensure they are protected and appreciated by current and future generations.

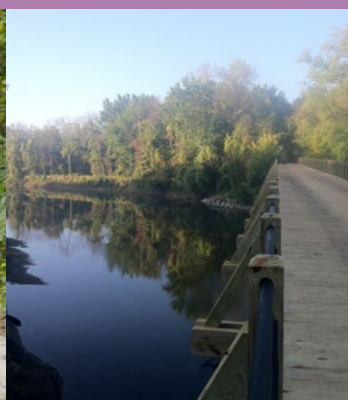
### **GOAL 1: Be exemplary stewards of Michigan's natural and cultural resources.**

*1.1: Objective: Manage natural resources at a natural community level (e.g. prairie fen), concentrating human and financial resources in the areas where the greatest conservation benefit can occur.*

#### Strategies:

- 1.1.1: Provide an annual prioritized list for natural resource management projects to be available and promoted to all PRD/departments staff.
- 1.1.2: Implement natural resource management projects, including ecological restoration.
- 1.1.3: Establish, modify and implement best management practices.
- 1.1.4: Complete the inventory of natural features for all PRD-administered lands and future acquisitions.
- 1.1.5: Concentrate efforts on maintaining high-quality natural resources.
- 1.1.6: Continue to support hunting and fishing opportunities through ecological restoration and other wildlife management techniques.

...healthy, abundant and diverse natural  
and cultural resources provide opportunity  
for outdoor recreation pursuits.



# Goals, Objectives and Strategies

## 1.2 Objective: *Manage invasive species and diseases.*

### Strategies:

- 1.2.1: With consideration of the Stewardship Program Strategic Plan, be proactive in prioritizing areas of concern.
- 1.2.2: Focus on prevention, early detection and rapid response.
- 1.2.3: Maximize and promote the use of partnerships and volunteers.
- 1.2.4: Collaborate within DNR and with other state agencies.
- 1.2.5: Educate PRD staff and visitors on invasive species and control through regular and consistent messaging and programming.

## 1.3 Objective: *Encourage and integrate environmentally sustainable practices within PRD.*

### Strategies:

- 1.3.1: Recognize and plan for the potential impacts of climate change at PRD-managed facilities.
- 1.3.2: Implement practices aimed at waste and energy reduction at PRD and community partner facilities.
- 1.3.3: Support the implementation of the recommendations from the Green Initiatives Team.
- 1.3.4: Develop programs to educate visitors on the sustainable practices of PRD and encourage participation.
- 1.3.5: Collaborate with Forest Resources Division to support and apply forest certification standards when working on state forest lands.

## 1.4 Objective: *Preserve, protect and maintain cultural resources.*

### Strategies:

- 1.4.1: Continue to review and prioritize projects annually.
- 1.4.2: Review and update the 2005 Strategic Plan for Historic Structures.
- 1.4.3: Review and facilitate interpretation opportunities for cultural resources at PRD facilities.
- 1.4.4: Continue surveys of archaeological and historic sites in state parks and recreation areas.
- 1.4.5: Inventory cultural features for PRD-administered linear state parks and trails.
- 1.4.6: Operate, maintain and restore Belle Isle cultural resources, including the Anna Scripps Whitcomb Conservatory and Aquarium.



# Goals, Objectives and Strategies

**GOAL 2: *Provide users with quality outdoor recreation experiences in balance with resource protection.***

**2.1 Objective: *Consider all recreation decisions in a deliberate and thoughtful manner.***

**Strategies:**

- 2.1.1: Collect and analyze data on existing land- and water-based PRD recreation opportunities.
- 2.1.2: Develop tools to assess potential impact of recreation and development projects.
- 2.1.3: Make decisions on proposed recreation developments based on potential user conflicts and impacts to natural, cultural, human and financial resources.
- 2.1.4: Enhance public outreach to inform decision making.
- 2.1.5: Evaluate and implement appropriate levels of access to land and water recreation opportunities.
- 2.1.6: Collaborate within DNR and with other state agencies to ensure all interests are considered.
- 2.1.7: Ensure future recreation use is compatible with the purpose of the land purchase (funding source)

**2.2 Objective: *Strengthen, update and implement the General Management Plan Program.***

**Strategies:**

- 2.2.1: Annually prioritize the development and implementation of management plans for parks and recreation areas.
- 2.2.2: Continually improve the planning process to increase efficiency and quality of the process and the product.
- 2.2.3: Implement effective public outreach to ensure the plans take into account community and park visitor needs.
- 2.2.4: Ensure meaningful participation from other DNR divisions.
- 2.2.5: Align Natural Resource Stewardship Plan development with the Management Plan for each park.

**2.3 Objective: *Continue to provide diverse recreation programs.***

**Strategies:**

- 2.3.1: Closely monitor recreation trends, and incorporate those best suited as programs to draw in new customers.
- 2.3.2: Diversify overnight lodging with facilities that provide memorable experiences and generate new revenue.
- 2.3.3: Review and facilitate opportunities for cultural resources interpretation at PRD facilities.



# Goals, Objectives and Strategies

## Vision:

### *Securing the Future of Michigan's Recreation*

Michigan residents and visitors highly value the variety and quality of recreation activities and trail systems available across the state. PRD will continue to improve and support outdoor recreation opportunities in association with recreation partners, responding to new trends and providing an introduction to the outdoors for new users. Today's youth will be aware of, and have easy access to, the natural environment and cultural resources for their enjoyment and health and to foster support for PRD's mission into the future.

### **GOAL 3: *Continue to advance Michigan as the "Trail State".***

#### **3.1 Objective: *Build a sustainable network of inter-connected trails guided by the objectives of the Statewide Comprehensive Trail Plan.***

##### **Strategies:**

- 3.1.1:** Work with communities to connect to recreational assets within the state.
- 3.1.2:** Advance the development of the water trail program.
- 3.1.3:** Define the hierarchy of non-motorized and motorized trails associated with the state trail network.
- 3.1.4:** Work to secure permanent site control for motorized trails.

#### **3.2 Objective: *Lead the advancement and implementation of the Iron Belle Trail.***

##### **Strategies:**

- 3.2.1:** Continue to administer grant programs to leverage community development efforts.
- 3.2.2:** Facilitate community engagement and collaboration to assist in the completion of the trail.
- 3.2.3:** Develop Iron Belle Trail projects on state-administered lands.
- 3.2.4:** Seek and secure private funding for implementation.

#### **3.3 Objective: *Continue to develop and implement policies and practices that lead to long-term trail sustainability.***

##### **Strategies:**

- 3.3.1:** Clearly identify roles and responsibilities for trail management and maintenance with PRD staff and partners.
- 3.3.2:** Improve existing and establish new sustainable funding mechanisms for maintenance and operation of PRD motorized and non-motorized trails.
- 3.3.3:** Explore the establishment of trail legacy endowment funds with partners.
- 3.3.4:** Recognize and plan for long-term maintenance in trail development and design.
- 3.3.5:** Create and nurture partnerships (public, private, non-profit) to sustain motorized and non-motorized trail development, management and promotion.

# Goals, Objectives and Strategies

**GOAL 4:** *Provide a relevant gateway to connect people to nature and Michigan's cultural heritage, and foster understanding and support for PRD's mission among future generations.*

**4.1 Objective:** *Explore and implement new programs and methods to engage youth.*

**Strategies:**

- 4.1.1: Use technology and social media to engage and educate new audiences.
- 4.1.2: Enhance the Explorer Guide program.
- 4.1.3: Enhance the Youth Employment Program.
- 4.1.4: Collaborate with the Natural Resource Commission's Youth Conservation Council to incorporate a range of outdoor recreation activities.

**4.2 Objective:** *Enhance facilities and programs for currently underserved populations.*

**Strategies:**

- 4.2.1: Increase PRD presence in urban communities.
- 4.2.2: Actively engage in school programs and curriculums in partnership with the DNR's Marketing and Outreach Division.
- 4.2.3: Identify barriers to participation and create initiatives to address barriers.

**4.3 Objective:** *Create and provide comfortable "introductions" to those who are unaccustomed to natural environments.*

**Strategies:**

- 4.3.1: Work with DNR's Marketing and Outreach Division to develop a strategy to ensure our visitor centers remain relevant to youth and future generations.
- 4.3.2: Bring natural resource recreation programs to youth in comfortable environments, partnering with Marketing and Outreach Division (e.g., Outdoor Adventure Center).
- 4.3.3: Utilize existing facilities to provide further introduction to daytime or overnight outdoor recreation experiences (e.g., Ralph A. MacMullan Center, Carl T. Johnson Hunt and Fish Center, Waterloo's Mill Lake Outdoor Center).
- 4.3.4: Encourage and empower visitors through self-guided experiences and supported outdoor recreation opportunities.
- 4.3.5: Partner with other DNR and non-DNR programs to further develop connections.

**4.4 Objective:** *Engage visitors in Michigan's cultural heritage.*

**Strategies:**

- 4.4.1: Promote the connection to human history and stories.
- 4.4.2: Engage with our cultural resource partners to provide interpretation and education opportunities.

# Goals, Objectives and Strategies

## Vision:

### *Serving Michigan's Residents and Communities*

Michigan's community leaders and residents feel informed and invested in the Parks and Recreation Division's mission, facilities and programs. PRD staff works effectively and collaboratively with each other and other DNR divisions and state agencies to achieve mutual goals. PRD fully implements a practice of open communication, engagement and positive relationships with stakeholders, legislators and the public. Residents and government officials understand the positive impact natural resource and cultural-based outdoor recreation has on Michigan's economy, driving and strengthening relationships that help communities to prosper.

### *GOAL 5: Improve and maintain strong public, stakeholder and department communication, relationships and partnerships.*

#### *5.1 Objective: Garner support for key initiatives from legislators by proactively engaging with defined user, advisory, and stakeholder groups.*

##### Strategies:

- 5.1.1: Invite the public, stakeholders, legislators and department staff to tour facilities and participate in programs within their local districts.
- 5.1.2: Identify and promote key messages for consistent communication.
- 5.1.3: Proactively engage with local officials and stakeholders on a regular basis to establish a continuous dialog.
- 5.1.4: Continue to seek recommendations from advisory committees and commissions when reviewing policies and initiatives.
- 5.1.5: Actively participate in community meetings to establish relationships and partnerships.

#### *5.2 Objective: Improve communication with PRD customers.*

##### Strategies:

- 5.2.1: Develop a PRD marketing plan in collaboration with the DNR Marketing Team.
- 5.2.2: Support PRD staff with the resources to effectively market their units.
- 5.2.3: Define and implement a process for keeping websites accurate and consistent, cultivating an ownership philosophy among PRD staff.
- 5.2.4: Develop a PRD communication plan.

#### *5.3 Objective: Continue to develop, nurture, and enhance partnerships.*

##### Strategies:

- 5.3.1: Strengthen, expand and promote the Friends Group program.
- 5.3.2: Pursue statewide and local agreements to support visitation, recreational use and sustainability of PRD and community partnership destinations.



# Goals, Objectives and Strategies

**5.4 Objective:** *Strengthen relationships among PRD staff, other DNR divisions, state and federal agencies, and tribal governments.*

**Strategies:**

- 5.4.1:** Create opportunities to improve the understanding of the roles and responsibilities of other staff members.
- 5.4.2:** Seek input from other DNR divisions when making department-wide decisions.
- 5.4.3:** When other DNR divisions are making department-wide decisions, ensure PRD actively engages.
- 5.4.4:** Work with state and federal agencies and tribal representatives to achieve mutual goals.

**5.5 Objective:** *Recognize the significant milestone of the Michigan State Park Commission Centennial (2019).*

**Strategies:**

- 5.5.1:** Forge partnerships with Michigan-based organizations to bring the celebration into non-traditional areas.
- 5.5.2:** Garner legislative support to propel Michigan state parks into the next 100 years.
- 5.5.3:** Localize the celebration through community and in-park events.
- 5.5.4:** Create historic interpretation that can be used in a variety of forms.
- 5.5.5:** Establish a branding and marketing plan to implement all planned activities.

PRD fully implements a practice of open communication, engagement and positive relationships.



# Goals, Objectives and Strategies

## GOAL 6: *Engage in strategies to increase community and state economic prosperity.*

6.1 Objective: *Collaborate to connect our PRD-administered lands with local and regional communities to support economic growth.*

### Strategies:

- 6.1.1: Quantify and promote the economic impact of PRD-administered lands, regionally and statewide.
- 6.1.2: Promote the role of state recreation and community partner facilities through place-making and regional prosperity programs.
- 6.1.3: Encourage staff to participate in regional and local economic growth or tourism efforts.

6.2 Objective: *Build and foster positive relationships with the business community.*

### Strategies:

- 6.2.1: Provide opportunities for businesses to operate within PRD-administered facilities.
- 6.2.2: Participate in, and partner with, local community events.
- 6.2.3: Partner with local communities to cross-promote.
- 6.2.4: Partner with local healthcare providers to achieve healthy outcomes for communities.

Strengthen relationships that help  
communities prosper.



# Goals, Objectives and Strategies

## **Vision:**

### ***Improving How PRD Works***

PRD will implement a collaborative culture and smart business practices to ensure efficient operations and effective investments. PRD will attract and maintain a talented workforce, which is outfitted with the necessary tools to do their jobs effectively.

## **GOAL 7: *Sustainably support PRD programs, operations and facilities.***

### **7.1 Objective: Secure a variety of sources to increase revenue.**

#### **Strategies:**

- 7.1.1: Explore legislative improvements for the Recreation Passport, including an opt-out option.
- 7.1.2: Continue to seek grant opportunities to leverage expenditures.
- 7.1.3: Continue to evaluate and adjust fee structure.
- 7.1.4: Support the PRD Innovations Committee to evaluate potential revenue-generating recreational opportunities and experiences.
- 7.1.5: Develop a PRD merchandising and retail campaign.

### **7.2 Objective: Identify priority infrastructure needs.**

#### **Strategies:**

- 7.2.1: Continue to annually evaluate and maintain a list of state park and waterway project priorities.
- 7.2.2: Continue to solicit, evaluate and prioritize PRD-administered grants for community projects.
- 7.2.3: Implement an infrastructure asset management program.

### **7.3 Objective: *Reduce infrastructure development, operations and maintenance costs statewide.***

#### **Strategies:**

- 7.3.1: Assess infrastructure to make reduction and repurpose recommendations using tools such as customer use records, recreation trends and capital funding availability.
- 7.3.2: Seek new and innovative materials and construction methods to reduce capital improvement costs.
- 7.3.3: When considering capital improvement projects, continue to regionally assess recreation opportunities and demand.
- 7.3.4: Determine PRD's cost to serve using data and funding models.
- 7.3.5: Consolidate infrastructure, where appropriate.

### **7.4 Objective: *Align funding sources to better meet needs.***

#### **Strategies:**

- 7.4.1: Identify sustainable funding sources for capital improvements, maintenance and operations.
- 7.4.2: Continue to evaluate expenses and make adjustments to align funding.
- 7.4.3: Develop a funding strategy to help implement appropriate capital improvements in "undeveloped" state parks.
- 7.4.4: Prioritize program spending and investments.



# Goals, Objectives and Strategies

## GOAL 8: *Foster and adopt effective and safe business practices.*

### 8.1 Objective: *Provide effective customer service, administration and program resources.*

#### Strategies:

- 8.1.1: Adopt, maintain and consistently implement effective policies and procedures.
- 8.1.2: Enhance available technology tools and services.
- 8.1.3: Invest in the development of data collection and management systems.
- 8.1.4: Statewide, evaluate and adjust staff levels to address PRD needs.

### 8.2 Objective: *Continue to develop and maintain a qualified and diverse workforce.*

#### Strategies:

- 8.2.1: Continue to provide relevant training opportunities to maintain a skilled workforce.
- 8.2.2: Create a culture that supports a work/life balance.
- 8.2.3: Implement strategies to attract motivated individuals who will help prepare the agency for the future.
- 8.2.4: Develop an equitable and consistent staffing model.
- 8.2.5: Develop a program to attract a broad representation reflecting Michigan's demographics.

PRD will attract and maintain  
a talented workforce.



# Implementation Plan

Now that the *PRD Strategic Plan 2017-2022: Connections* is complete, it is critical for all staff to commit to doing their part to accomplish the goals and objectives identified in the plan. Everyone plays an integral role to ensure success. While moving forward with this strategic plan, it is important to document progress along the way. These approaches will be used as PRD's roadmap to the future.

**Expect participation at all levels of PRD.** This is not a top-down approach to implementation. This plan will require staff at every level to commit to, and act upon, the priorities outlined in this strategic plan.

**Develop annual action plans that focus on specific strategies.** This strategic plan includes a considerable list of objectives and strategies that PRD could not possibly tackle all at once. Therefore, PRD will establish priority areas of focus each year. PRD recognizes that some priorities will change from year to year, and some may carry over through multiple years. Examples of variables that can influence PRD's priorities are finances, infrastructure failure, weather, natural and cultural resource threats, the economy, legislation and emerging opportunities. Annual action plan focal points may be driven by a given program, unit or location. It will be important to establish feasible timelines and set achievable milestones, which will allow PRD to measure its progress. Early in each fiscal year, PRD will establish milestones in order to effectively progress the strategic plan goals. By the end of each fiscal year, PRD will report on the status of satisfying the strategic plan goals and objectives.



# Implementation Plan

**Engage key stakeholders to accomplish annual strategies.** PRD cannot accomplish the strategic plan's goals and objectives alone; success will require partnership with vested stakeholders. Engagement with stakeholders will need to occur throughout the agency, ranging from the unit level to executive/legislative. Communication will be critical, in order to stay on track with annual action plans.

## **Implement tools to document success:**

- Incorporate elements of the strategic plan in employee performance plan objectives.
- Each employee is responsible to ensure the success of the strategic plan. Use annual employee performance plans to set achievable individual objectives, which will allow supervisors and managers to measure individual progress.
- For all PRD sections, use existing or develop new, reporting procedures to document strategic plan progress. For example, the Operations Section could use its existing weekly and monthly reporting process to include strategic plan success stories.
- Ensure that programming offered during the bi-annual PRD meeting is aligned with the strategic plan. Use this meeting as an opportunity to share success stories and to identify components of the strategic plan that need to be nurtured.
- Continue to share the strategic plan with advisory groups, stakeholders and community groups to assist in collaboration and understanding. Use the goals and objectives to guide decision-making with friends groups, in management planning, etc.
- Publish an annual report to document strategic plan progress. Establish a tracking mechanism to measure progress of the *PRD Strategic Plan 2017-2022: Connections*.

Everyone plays an integral role to ensure success.





# Appendix A - Timeline of Significant Events

## Capturing the rich history of Parks and Recreation Division

### 1910s-1920s

Interlochen State Park was acquired in 1917 and became the first state park in 1919 when the Michigan legislature established the Michigan State Parks Commission



The Department of Conservation was created in 1921. The park system was supported by the private sector in these early years, and P.J. Hoffmaster was named the first superintendent of the state parks in 1922



### 1930s-1940s



The Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) created much of the infrastructure in our state parks

The National Park Service created Recreational Demonstration Areas (RDA). Waterloo and Yankee Springs RDA's were turned over to the state in 1943.

The Porcupine Mountains Wilderness State Park was acquired in 1944. The Legislature also appropriated \$3 million for acquisition of "Recreational Areas" in southern Michigan, resulting in 10 new parks.

The Michigan State Waterways Commission was established in 1947.



### 1950s-1960s

PUBLIC ACT 149 OF 1960 – The State Motor Vehicle Permit and Bond Authorization Law. This allowed implementation of a motor vehicle fee to enter state parks.



In 1968 the Department of Natural Resources was created and assumed responsibility of the Michigan State Waterways Commission.



## 1970s-1980s



The Michigan Natural Resources Trust Fund was created in 1976. This provided funding for land purchases and development for recreation.

The Rails to Trails program began in Michigan after the DNR and Department of Transportation began purchasing abandoned railroad right-of-ways.



## 1990s-2000s



The parks and boating programs of the DNR merged in 1993 to form the Parks and Recreation Division.

The Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Act (NREPA) was established in 1994.



PUBLIC ACT 392 OF 2004 – established the Citizen's Committee for Michigan State Parks (now Michigan State Parks Advisory Committee).

## 2010s - Now

The Outdoor Adventure Center opened in 2015 and the state entered into a lease to manage Belle Isle Park, expanding DNR outreach in urban southeast Michigan.



PRD responsibilities expanded to include recreation on state forest lands.

# Appendix B -- SWOT Results Report

Staff, stakeholder, advisory group and public input was an integral part of the strategic plan development. Between April and June 2016, the core strategic plan team held Strength, Weakness, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) workshops around the state. For staff meetings, participants were asked to write down their responses. This enabled the team to analyze repeating themes across the different districts and regions. For stakeholder and advisory committee meetings, the SWOT was conducted by asking participants to call out their responses, which were written down on a flip-chart. A list of stakeholders invited to the initial meetings is included in the appendices of this plan.

## Parks and Recreation Division Staff

Date	Agency/Group	Location
24-Mar-16	Lansing Office	Constitution Hall, Lansing
29-Mar-16	Plainwell District	Allegan Field Office, Allegan
13-Apr-16	Rose Lake District	Waterloo Recreation Area, Chelsea
22-Apr-16	PRD Management Team	North Marina, South Haven
27-Apr-16	Gaylord/Roscommon Districts	RAM Conference Center, Roscommon
11-May-16	Eastern/Western UP Districts	Bay De Noc Community College, Escanaba
13-May-16	Metro District	Algonac State Park, Marine City
16-Jun-16	Cadillac District	Ludington State Park, Ludington

## Advisory Groups

Date	Agency/Group	Location
14-Apr-16	Michigan State Park Advisory Committee	Demmer Sports Center, Lansing
21-Apr-16	Belle Isle Park Advisory Committee	Flynn Pavilion, Detroit
29-Apr-16	Michigan State Waterways Commission	Riverfront Restaurant, St. Clair
21-Jun-16	Snowmobile Advisory Workgroup	BJ's Restaurant, Gaylord
07-Jul-16	Michigan Trails Advisory Council (MTAC)	RAM Conference Center, Roscommon

## Stakeholders

Date	Location
05-May-16	Michigan History Center, Lansing
10-May-16	Ojibwa Casino, Baraga
11-May-16	University Center, Marquette
01-Jun-16	Oakland County Executive Office, Waterford Township
21-Jun-16	Jay's Sporting Goods, Gaylord



The information collected at these meetings was analyzed to determine recurring themes and to identify the key issues that should be addressed by this strategic plan. The lists below reflect the responses that were most prominent.

## Strengths

overall beauty	tourism and recreation societal impact
unique and diverse features and resources	various funding sources
abundance, variety and location of park land	resourceful staff
variety and availability of facilities and activities	diverse skillset
protection and preservation resources	Recreation Passport
importance of water resources	teamwork
amount of fresh water in Michigan	leadership
helpful customer service	dedication
people-oriented	adaptability
good communication with visitors	PRD's clear vision
strong outreach and educational program	ease of acquiring a fishing license
consistent branding	quality planning process
economic driver	protection of funding
quality partnerships and collaborations	Trails Section
public support	equestrian accommodations
government support	vast network of trails
dedicated and returning visitors	number of boating sites available
passionate staff	variety of camping experiences
knowledgeable staff	parks are clean and safe
dedicated staff	
friendly staff	

## Weaknesses

visitor conflicts	difficulties of hiring qualified staff
lack of partnerships with diverse community groups	retaining short-term workers
lacking the visitor demographic data	lack of hours and pay
political interference	lack of support/appreciation for field staff from the department
prioritizing special interest groups	lack of diversity in the staff
control of land and water invasive species	lack of training
threats to our waters	lack of funding and resources
communicating with the public	lack of sharing of resources as a concern
outreach and education programs not inclusive	staff given more tasks than they can handle
marketing and promoting	conflicting policies
increasing fees	bureaucracy
decreasing PRD funding	inconsistent procedures and laws
lack of good economic data	lack of cohesive leadership
losing staff	poor data management
shortage of staff	

# Appendix B - SWOT Results Report

## Weaknesses *continued*

- poor decision-making process
- execution of plans
- lack of communication
- aging infrastructure

- overcrowding
- scarce human and financial resources
- signage on trails
- connectivity between parks and communities

## Opportunities

- acquiring new lands
- build parks in areas currently lacking
- Belle Isle Park is a draw for variety of visitors and possibly international guests
- engaging programs for youth
- listen to the public's input
- discover ways to engage the communities
- Pure Michigan campaign
- connect motor trail systems to local communities
- identify revenue sources from the visitors
- more boat manufacturing in Michigan
- facilities are economic drivers
- new partnerships: universities, friends groups, youth groups, local groups, etc.
- develop a network of visitor groups
- engage the younger generation
- workforce development
- increase training

- increase seasonal work hours
- re-evaluate pay
- opt-out option for Recreation Passport
- increase funding/grants
- government support
- water trails registration fee for non-motorized boats
- water trails system
- bringing concessions to harbors
- new technology
- develop more trail systems
- increase accessibility to the PRD lands from local communities
- Americans with Disabilities Act regulations
- recreational activities that appeal to youth, such as kiteboarding
- build sustainable facilities
- repurpose buildings

## Threats

- climate change
- invasive species
- dependence on climate for recreation
- fluctuating water levels
- extreme weather events
- surrounding development/urbanization
- private ownership of snowmobile trails
- overuse
- competing land uses
- skewed public perception
- uninformed communities
- unpredictable economic shifts
- growing poverty statewide
- decrease in disposable income
- increase in fuel costs
- vehicle registration fees

- change in government officials
- lack of support from the Legislature
- lose of visitor support, specifically youth
- competition from other park systems
- lack of support for land acquisitions
- loss of staff expertise
- low wages
- legislative interference
- changes in administration
- lack of sustainable funding
- poor crisis management
- staying relevant with new technology
- bureaucratic process
- decline of interest in activities
- keeping up with changing trends
- shrinking of private marine operators

# Appendix C - Legal Authorities

## PARKS

PUBLIC ACT 218 OF 1919 - Created the Michigan State Park Commission to acquire lands for state parks.

PUBLIC ACT 451 OF 1994, PART 741 - STATE PARK SYSTEM – NATURAL RESOURCE AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION ACT - This act is the recodification of law that established the Michigan State Park System and defined the powers and duties of same.

- Section 324.74102 identifies the duties of the State Park System as follows:

1. "The legislature finds:
  - a. Michigan State Parks preserve and protect Michigan's significant natural and historic resources.
  - b. Michigan State Parks are appropriate and uniquely suited to provide opportunities to learn about protection and management of Michigan's natural resources.
  - c. Michigan State Parks are an important component of Michigan's tourism industry and vital to local economies.
2. The department shall create, maintain, operate, promote, and make available for public use and enjoyment a system of state parks to preserve and protect Michigan's significant natural resources and areas of natural beauty or historic significance, to provide open space for public recreation, and to provide an opportunity to understand Michigan's natural resources and need to protect and manage those resources."

## BOATING

PUBLIC ACT 320 OF 1947 – HARBORS AND DOCKS PROGRAM – Created the Michigan State Waterways Commission to take advantage of federal monies made available from the 1945 Rivers and Harbors Act which provided funding for U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE) projects on navigable waters of the nation. This established the Michigan "Harbor-of-Refuge System" with the objectives to develop harbors and docking facilities on the Great Lakes shoreline as required to provide for the safe boating enjoyment of these waters, and to encourage tourist-related economic development.

PUBLIC ACT 451 OF 1994, PART 781 – MICHIGAN STATE WATERWAYS COMMISSION – This act is the recodification of law that established the Michigan State Waterways Commission and defined the powers and duties of same.

- Section 324.78105 identifies the powers and duties of the department, defined in part as follows:

1. To acquire, construct, and maintain harbors, channels, and facilities for vessels in the navigable waters lying within the boundaries of the state of Michigan.

- Section 324.78110 defines the use of the Waterways account for only:

1. Construction, operation, and maintenance of recreational boating facilities.
2. Acquisition of property for the purposes of this part.
3. For grants to local units of government and state colleges or universities to acquire and develop harbors of refuge and public boating access sites under section 78115.
4. For the purposes provided in part 791.

- Section 324.78115 established the boating access grant program, defined in part:

1. The department shall establish a public boating access sites grant program. The grant program shall provide funding with money in the waterways account to local units of government and public colleges or universities for all or a portion of the cost of either or both of the following:
  - A. The acquisition of land for the establishment of a public boating access site.
  - B. The cost of developing a public boating access site.

PUBLIC ACT 451 OF 1994, PART 791 – HARBOR DEVELOPMENT – This act is the recodification of law that established the Harbor Development program and defined the powers and duties of same.





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